DWELLER IN HALLWAY CHAINS EFFECTS TO FLOOR IN VAIN ATTEMPT TO PREVENT HIS EVICTION.

—By a Republic Photographer.

JOSEPH CUSTER AND THE OLD HOUSE IN WHICH HE LIVED AND CONDUCTED A SHOE SHOP ON NORTH FOURTEENTH STREET.

For two days deputy constables labored in a dingy hallway at No. 1009 North Fourteenth street before they were able to evict Joseph Custer, an eccentric character who made his home there for two years, because of the fact that all of his effects were chained to the floor. They finally succeeded and now Custer's belongings are on the sidewalk, the landlord is in possession and the stubborn tenant is looking for a new home.

It cost more to put him out than a year's rent would amount to. The amount Custer owed was $4, but the costs will be four or five times that amount. Custer, when served with the summons, declared he would do bodily harm to the Constables if they attemped to evict him, but this threat he evidently feared to carry out.

Instead he dug up part of the wall and used the brick as a barricade to the front door, the only entrance to the place. Then he used some heavy screening, which he has had for years and constructed rough cage, but substantial enough to give the minions of the law much trouble before they could effect an opening.

BESIEGED HIS LITTLE FORT.

The old cobbler remained at his post as long as the hastily constructed cage would withstand the onslaught of the constables, but when they finally succeeded in forcing their way into the place his sprit fell and he surrendered the fort to the enemy.

But the troubles of the Constables only began when they entered the place. Every article of furniture, such as it was, was securely fastened to the wall or floor, the cage had been simply, though securely put together, and as the representatives of the law toiled and perspired to undo what the old cobbler had done, Custer stood without and chuckled to himself.

Custer's work bench and stove, bed and other articles were "nailed down," so to speak, and no Constables ever experienced such difficulty in evicting a person as did the deputies who put old Custer on the sidewalk. The eviction began Wednesday and was not completed until yesterday afternoon.

STOVE FASTENED TO BUILDING.

The most difficult piece of houseware to be removed was the stove which Custer used both for heating and cooking purposes. The affair was of very small size, but Custer had it securely chained and bolted to the floor, and for stovepipe he used gaspipe, which he ran from the stove to the top of the second story. The pipe, like the stove, was chained and bolted. It took almost four hours to remove the stove.

Now Custer has no home, his belongings are piled up on the sidewalk in front of the old building, and he is scouring the city in quest of another place where he can again take up the life of a hermit, as he is called by those who know him.

Custer is perhaps the most eccentric character St. Louis ever had. He has lived all over the city and has been evicted many times. While a cobbler by trade, he has always an idea that he was an inventor. While in a sense a genius, none of his "inventions" ever proved a success.

SLEEPS IN SWINGING BED.

Besides caging himself he always suspended his bed from the ceiling, and at night when he retired he would lower his "bunk," and after getting into it, pull it from the floor. Then he felt safe from burglars or other unwelcome visitors.

Years ago Custer established himself at Twenty-first and Wash street, and his unique home at that place is yet remembered. At that time Custer constructed a home of glass. He gathered glass from various parts of the city and built the house.

His shop was one of the curiosities of the city. Old iron of all descriptions, and tools, weapons and everything was collected by him. He often tried some invention, but never succeeded.

HEROIC WORK OF THE SIERRA TELEPHONE LINEMEN.

Brave Repair Men of Pacific Company Have to Undergo the Rigors of Weather in High Altitudes—Muscle, Nerve and a Thorough Knowledge of the Busniess Is Required.

San Francisco, March 21.—Probably one of the most dangerous occupations in the world is that of a telegraph lineman. Every day as he fearlessly goes about his work in the repair departments of the telegraph, railroad and telephone companies, the lineman takes his life in his hands, never certain that he will complete his day's work or that he will return to his home at night. There are men who work daily within a few inches of a "hot" wire or strand cable carrying from 40,000 to 50,000 volts, and to work among wires that carry 2,000 to 5,000 volts is a common thing. To touch one of the latter wires or to make a circuit through an unknown leak may mean instant death, although not necessarily so. Recently at Niles, a lineman received through his body the larger share of a voltage of 40,000 and lived to tell all about it; but his case was one in a million.

STRENUOUS REPAIR WORK.

The work of any lineman is hazardous in the extreme, but the work done in the winter time in the mountains is the most dangerous of all. For three years the Pacific States Telephone Company has had lines over the Sierra Nevada mountains and in their maintenance and repairing from day to day in the zero atmospheres, linemen, aside from the ordinary danger of the work have had to undergo the rigors of weather in the high altitudes, have suffered from snow blindness, have been partially frozen at times, have lost their way in the fierce snowstorms and almost perished from starvation and sometimes have been swept away by snow slides and never heard of again. Accidents of the latter nature have been of quite frequent occurrence and there is absolutely no way of forecasting them or of evading them when they come.

The telephone repair men are subjected to even greater dangers than the telegraph and railroad linemen, for the reason that the latter follow the railroads and much of the way have the protection of snow-sheds. The telephone linemen, however, are out in the exposed open much of the time on the sheer sides of the mountains, where a snowslide may sweep them out of existence at any moment. Aside from that, they have to traverse snow from two to fourteen feet in depth on nine foot snowshoes, and if a snowshoe breaks on a hidden projection of rock or a snag, the lineman, far from houses and men or help of any kind, may meet a miserable and lonely death. Starvation then awaits him even if he does not freeze to death meantime or is not smothered while floundering in the snow with his heavy equipment.

WHAT IS REQUIRED.

Muscle, nerve and a thorough knowledge of the business, besides an accurate knowledge of the mountains and their dangers, is required of the lineman doing this class of work. He must know no such word as fear or fatigue, and in his territory must keep the lines in working order and open for business. If tests show that a line is down, he must traverse weary, painful miles on his snowshoes and locate it, repair it, and continue on his inspection until relieved by another man. Often it is necessary for him to telephone down to Sacramento for assistance. In that case he must await the coming of the men sent out to aid him, and keep in touch with them.

There are two linemen now in San Francisco who have been through all of the rigors of the mountain work and who were forced to leave it on account of the terrible strain, although they were paid high wages for the work they accomplished by the telephone company. One of them, Foreman Simon Mann, still with the Pacific States Company, constructed the seven-strand aluminum cable line over the mountains three years ago and had a wealth of experiences and adventures during his work at that time. Another man, who has but recently returned from the district, and who is now in the employ of the Southern Pacific Company, is James Gagan, who is now assisting in the building of new telegraph lines on the outskirts of the city. For two years Gagan worked at Summit, up in the mountains in the high altitudes, and had experiences that he will carry with him to the grave. He endured every hardship that men in the business can suffer, but never lost his nerve or failed in an undertaking, which, under the circumstances, is a remarkable record. He was also stationed at Truckee and had fourteen miles of the telephone cable under his supervision. This was on the comparatively new line from Reno to Sacramento.

DANGER OF SNOW BLINDNESS.

Gagan was obliged to wear smoked glasses almost continually. He never suffered from snow blindness, however, as did some of his companions, and seemed to be impervious to any kind of danger, calloused to any risks and wholly indifferent to fatigue. While some of the men who even had worn glasses were suffering for weeks at a time in dark rooms with the sharp excruciating pains which come from snow blindness, Gagan was able to be at his work and apparently was not affected by the dazzling glare from the surface of the snow.

He wore the nine-foot American snowshoes, which weight about a pound and a half apiece and was sometimes obliged for weeks at a time to make the entire circuit of his fourteen miles of territory daily. On May 4 of last year there was a terrible sleet storm in the mountains, which leveled every wire to the ground and had men out in the mountains for weeks reconstructing and repairing. Gagan said that for days men had to traverse the damp snow on their snowshoes, their progress being so impeded by the heaviness and dampness of the clinging snow that after a few hours of tramping they would be well nigh exhausted.

If snow was so damp as to make progress slow it was often necessary for the lineman to camp out overnight with but the merest pretense at a camp, and with short rations. For one whole month Gagan made the entire circuit of his fourteen miles of territory on foot daily in the heavy snows repairing wires and inspecting.

The rocks and sides of the mountains were covered with snow, and every step might mean a fall of hundreds of feet to the yawning, rocky crags below, with sure death the prospect of such a fall. Not infrequently Gagan received severe shocks and was knocked off from the tops of poles to the ground below, nothing but the thick covering of snow saving him from serious injury. In one week he fell from the tops of poles three times, and never thought it of enough consequence to report it to his company or say anything about it.

He frequently received shocks from "hot" wires containing 2,000 volts, but he never received serious injury. His was a remarkable case, for he seemed to bear a charmed existence. At one time he fell over a sixty-five-foot embankment, but luckily fell on a pile of snow about ten feet deep, and suffered nothing but an inconvenient lack of breath for a few moments. Time and again, when he saw small snowslides coming, he jumped behind abutting rocks and was saved from being swept into the canyon below.

If hunters and mischievous boys only knew what a crime they were committing when they shot the glass insulators off telephone and telegraph wires they would never again be guilty of such a folly. Many a lineman has gone to his death because of some thoughtless and ignorant person shooting an insulator off from a pole cross arm. Sometimes the leak caused will precipitate a veritable maelstrom of high-power currents through a lineman's body, and he will fall to the ground below, a lifeless mass, or will fall over into the network of wires and burn until his body is rescued by his comrades.

This is one of the greatest dreads of the linemen—the unlooked-for encountering of a hot leak, which may snuff their lives out in the twinkling of an eye. So serious a matter has this become in the East that strict laws have been passed bearing on tampering with insulators in any manner. Daily in Chicago and New York and other Eastern cities linemen are killed in this manner as the result of some person's wishing to prove his marksmanship on an insulator. Whether a man's life is endangered or not, it takes a great deal of trouble and considerable expense to repair the work done by a bullet or stone which brakes an insulator. The pity of it is that in most cases the damage is done innocently by the offender, who does not know what consequences he may entail.